

BILL FONTANA

b. 1947, Cleveland, Ohio

Lives and works in San Francisco, CA

In a career spanning 50 years, Bill Fontana has become internationally recognized for his pioneering experiments in sound. He has consistently used sound as a sculptural medium to interact with and transform our perceptions of visual and architectural spaces. Applying his knowledge of composition, he draws out patterns of sound from natural and manmade worlds to create sound works that have the potential to conjure up visual imagery in the mind of the listener.

Many of these works create live listening networks that collect information from sources as diverse as the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, the Millennium Bridge in London, the beaches of Normandy, foghorns in San Francisco, old growth forests, hydroelectric turbines and urban environments. From the late nineties until the present, Fontana's projects have explored hybrid listening technologies using acoustic microphones, underwater sensors (hydrophones) and structural/material sensors (accelerometers). His more recent works are explorations of the relationship between image and sound, expressed through the combined mediums of audio and video.

Fontana's work has been exhibited internationally at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Kunsthaus Graz, Kolumba Museum, Cologne, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, MAXXI, Rome, the Art History and Natural History Museums in Vienna, both Tate Modern and Tate Britain in London, the 48th Venice Biennale, the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne and the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney. He has realized sound sculptures, public art commissions, and radio projects for museums and broadcast organizations around the world.

EDUCATION

- 1970 BA, Social Research, The New School, New York City
- 1967 Cleveland Institute of Music, Ohio
- 1967 John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio

SELECTED COMMISSIONS AND PROJECTS

- 2009 *Tyne Soundings*, Baltic Center for Contemporary Art and Sage Gateshead, Newcastle, UK
Spiraling Echoes, San Francisco Art Commission, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Speeds of Time*, Tate Britain, London, UK
Sound Design for a pavilion designed by Foster and Partners for London Architecture Week
- 2007 *Objective Sound*, Western Bridge, Seattle, WA
Panoramic Echoes, Madison Square Park, New York, NY
- 2006 *Harmonic Bridge*, Tate Modern, London, UK
- 2005 *Sound Lines*, Dark Arches in Leeds, UK
- 2004-06 *Sonic Landscaping*, NBBJ Design, Seattle, WA
- 2004 *Speeds of Time*, Palace of Westminster, London, UK
Primal Soundings, Leeds City Gallery and Contemporary Art Society, UK
Ants, Sounds of the Rainforest of Trinidad and Army Ant Habitats, California Academy of Science, San Francisco, CA
- 2003 *Speeds of Time*, BBC, London, UK
- 2002 *Falling Echoes*, Creative Time, New York, NY
Antigone, Dusseldorf Schauspiel Haus, Dusseldorf, Germany
- 1999 *Acoustical Visions of Venice*, 48th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy
Wave Memories, Trafalgar Square, National Maritime Museum, London, UK
- 1997-99 *Sounds of the British Coast*, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, UK
- 1995-96 *Sounds of the Old City of Jerusalem*, DAAD Berlin, Berlin Germany
- 1995 *Time Fountain*, Fundació Antoni Tapies, Barcelona, & Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain
- 1994 *Sound Island*, Arc de Triomphe, Paris
- 1993 *Soundbridge Cologne*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
Soundbridge Kyoto, National Museum of Modern Art Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan
- 1991 *Vertical Water*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York
- 1990 *Landscape Soundings*, Vienna Festival, Kunsthistorisches Museum
- 1988 *Australian Rainforests*, Australian Broadcasting Commission
Farallon Island Soundscapes, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco,
- 1987 *Sound Sculptures through the Golden Gate*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- 1986 *Sounds of Hawaii*, Hawaii Public Radio, Honolulu
- 1985 *Acoustic Journey: An Investigation of Traditional Japanese Sounds on the Verge of Extinction*, Wacoal Art Center, Tokyo, Japan
- 1984 *Entfernte Züge (Distant Trains)*, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, West Berlin, Germany
Rainforests of Thailand, Jungle World, New York Zoological Society, New York, NY
- 1983 *Oscillating Steel Grids along the Brooklyn Bridge*, World Trade Center and Brooklyn Museum, New York City, NY
- 1982-83 *Soundscapes, 365 Four Minute Radio Programs on Environmental Sound*, National Public Radio
- 1980 *Sound Recycling Sculpture*, Akademie der Künste, West Berlin and Musée d'art moderne, Paris, France
- 1979 *Soundscapes, 365 Four Minute Radio Programs on Environmental Sound*, National Public Radio
- 1978 *Sound Sculpture with Resonators*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
- 1977 *Kirribilli Wharf*, Australian Broadcasting Corp and Sydney Opera House,
- 1973-78 *Australian Sound Studies*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

SELECTED PERMANENT INSTALLATIONS

- 2018 *Sonic Dreamscapes*, City of Miami Beach public art collection/New World Center, Miami Beach, FL
- 2017 *Acoustic Visions of the River Mur*, Kunsthaus, Graz, Austria
- 2014 *Sonic Mappings*, MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Art, Rome, Italy
- 2009 *Sonic Passage*, San Antonio River Foundation, San Antonio, TX
Acoustic Journey, Cultuurmijl, Enschede, Holland
- 2007 *Objective Sound*, Western Bridge, Seattle, WA
Pigeon Soundings, Kolumba, Cologne, Germany
- 2004 *Primal Soundings*, Leeds City Gallery and Contemporary Art Society, Leeds, UK
- 1993 *Spiraling Sound Axis*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC
- 1992 *Earth Tones*, Oliver Ranch Foundation, Geysersville, CA
- 1981 *Landscape Sculpture with Fog Horns*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

FELLOWSHIPS

- 2007 Centre for Cultural Innovation, Investing in Artists Grant,
- 2005 San Francisco Bay Area Award, Artadia
- 2004-05 Research Fellowship, Arts Council of England
- 1990-91 Artists Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts
- 1986-87 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation
- 1985-86 US/Japan Fellowship, Japan-US Friendship Commission
- 1983-84 Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD
- 1979 Composers Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts

AWARDS

- 2012-14 Prix Ars Electronica Collide @ CERN Prize
- 2009 Golden Nica Award in the category of 'Digital Music & Sound Art' at the Prix Ars Electronica
- 2009 Bay Area Treasure Lifetime Achievement Award, SFMOMA

PEDAGOGY

- 2011-12 Distinguished Visiting Professor, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL
- 2004-05 Visiting Professor, Department of Electro-Acoustic Music, University of Birmingham, UK
- 2000-03 Professor, Academy of Media Arts, Cologne, Germany
- 1995-97 Professor, San Francisco Art Institute, CA
- 1994-95 Visiting Professor, Sorbonne Université, Paris, France

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2022 Blue, Max. *Sound sculptor Bill Fontana will rewire your reality.* The San Francisco Examiner. February 25, 2022
- 2008 Fontana, Bill. *The Relocation of Ambient Sound, Leonardo*, Volume 41, Issue 2 (republished).
- 2006 Riding, Alan. "The Sound Artist Bill Fontana Amplifies the Tate Modern's Millennium Bridge." *The New York Times*, June 20, 2006.
- 2005 Rudi, Jøran. "From a Musical Point of View, the World is Musical at any Given Moment" an Interview with Bill Fontana, *Journal of Organised Sound*, Volume 10.2, Cambridge University Press.
- Riley, Robert. "Bill Fontana – Speeds of Time", Haunch of Venison, London.
- 2004 Crowley, Julian, Interview with Bill Fontana, "The Wire", London, April 2004.
- 1994 Blume, Mary, "Portrait of Bill Fontana," *International Herald Tribune*, July 9, 1994.
- Rockwell, John. "A Parisian Landmark Heard in a New Light." *The New York Times*, June 18, 1994, sec. Arts.
- 1990 John Hanhardt, Heidi Grundmann, and Werner Fenz, *Landscape Soundings*, Vienna Festival, Vienna.
- 1987 Fontana, Bill. "The Relocation of Ambient Sound: Urban Sound Sculpture." *Leonardo* 20, no. 2 (1987): 143-147.